CONGRESSIONAL.

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SPEECH OF HON. TRUMAN SMITH,

Delivered in the Senate, February 17, 1853; on the bill for the protection of the emigrant route, and a tele-graphic line, and for an overland mail, between the Missouri river and the settlements in California and

Oregon.
Mr. SMITH said:
Mr. Paramers: I do not know but that this subject has already been sufficiently discussed to enlighten the deliberations of the Senate, and to conduct us to such results as shall accord with the public interest. I am a strong friend of this measure, and do not intend it shall be killed off by unnecessary or protracted debate. If, therefore, the Senate will indicate a desire to bring the question at once to the test of a vote, I will resume my

Mr. GWIN. Agreed! let us have a vote.
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Mr. COOPER. I desire to address the Senate on the subject, and cannot consent to forego the privileges of the floor.

Several Senators, to Mr. Saith. Go on! go on! Mr. SMITH. I must, then, throw myself on the indulgence of the Senate in submitting a few remarks, which it trust will be accorded to me, if for no other reason, in consideration of the fact that I seldom obtrude myself on the notice of this body, and never except to discuss some matter of practical importance. I have taken no part in the discussion of a variety of questions which have been raised here touching our foreign relations, and which have occupied a large portion of our time during the present session, to the exclusion of this and other matters deeply concerning the welfare of the American people. But though we are brought very late to an examination of this bill, I hope enough of time and opportunity remains to enable us to make an enlightened and proper disposition of the question before us. And what, sir, is that question? Is it whether we shall now adopt a measure commended to our confidence by the deliberations of some of the ablest and most experienced members of this body.

I confess, Mr. President, I have concluded, contrary to my first impression, that it is my duty to acquiesce in the result of those deliberations, and to give the bill before us, with slight exceptions my cordial support. It is true I did, very early in the debate, express the opinion that it would be impracticable, during the present short seasion, so to arrange and settle the general plan and details of a bill as that it would command the support of the two houses of Congress. I therefore insisted that nothing more could be done than to make provision for such surveys and explorations as would be required for a proper and just appreciation of the subject by the next Congress. But the select committee, at the head of which my honorable and excellent friend, the senator from Texas, [Mr. Ruse,] has been placed, has satisfied me that I was mistaken. They have brough ure and postpone even the commencement of this work for two years longer. Be it remembered, if we do not act for two years longer. Be it remembered, if we do not act now, no bill can be got through the next Congress until July or August, 1854, and that little or nothing can be done to advance the measure until the spring of 1855. Hence, sir, I rejoice at the success of the committee, and I desire to proffer to them my cordial thanks for their indefatigable labors. If nothing is now done on this important subject, no one can think of laying the blame at their door.

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I repeat, Mr. President, I consider this bill substantially right. I do not mean that either the general plan or details are such as I would have proposed. I suppose if every honorable member were to be charged with a subject like this, susceptible of an infinite variety of plans and details, each would adopt a measure having a specific character, and differing from that of every other member. If we are to wait until every member has before him exactly the scheme he would prefer, we should wait until the end of time. I feel myself under an obligation to lay aside my preferences and my notions of what would be best in dealing with such a subject. If I can find in the bill a plan that is practicable, and which does not compromit any great public interest, or violate any fundamental principle, it will be enough for me. I shall feel it to be my duty to accord to it my support.

And what, Mr. President, is the object contemplated by this bill, and what is the scheme by which that object is to be reached? The former is one of the most magnificent which could be proposed to an American Senate, being no less than the establishment of a railroad and telegraphic communication between the navigable waters of the Missessime interest.

being no less than the establishment of a railroad and telegraphic communication between the navigable waters of the Mississippi river, or one of its tributaries, and those of the Pacific coast, and this, too, wholly within our own territory—an enterprise of vast magnitude, which, when accomplished, cannot fail to produce results of infinite consequence to ourselves and to the world. The scheme is a moderate one. It does not involve an appropriation of any considerable amount of the public treasure, and certainly no part of the public domain now of much value, and yet it holds out such encouragements for the investment of private capital, and the enlistment of private enterprise, as to make the execution of the of private enterprise, as to make the execution of the work, within a reasonable period, morally certain. The bill sets uside \$20,000,000 for this work, to be advanced as it progresses, and grants in the States alternate sec-tions of the public lands, on each side of the road, for six miles in width, and in the Territories for tweive miles

earth, and mark it by suitable monuments. How infinitely more vast is the undertaking proposed by the honorable senator! Estimates of embankments, excavations, masonry, and other matters appertaining to a railroad, would be found to be quite a different affair from merely settling a line, as in the case of the United States and Mexico. I verily believe the surveys that would be necessary to enable Congress to determine which is the most practicable and most economical route would require more time and a larger expenditure of money than the construction of the road itself.

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But the honorable senator [Mr. Brodhead] requires of the Secretary of War to receive proposals for the construction of a road from the valley of the Mississippi to the Pacific ocean, and to lay them before Congress at the feast session. How can proposals be made when the honorable senator does not condescend to inform us how, when, or where this road is to be constructed? He does not say whether it is to be a road to the Columbia river or to San Francisco, or, if to the latter point, whether it shall have its course through the South Pass or by New Mexico—whether its easiern terminus shall be on the Mississippi or at some point in the western boundary of Arkansas, Missouri, or flowar-whether it is to be a road with a single or double track, nor whether it shall be chaished in five years or twenty-five. The idea of getting any valuable information for the guidance of Congress in this strange way cannot of course be seriously enterestained by one so eminently practical as the honorable of mover. Without intending any disrespect to the senator, I have to say I consider his proposition a mere evasion of sthe question before us. I think it would be better to reject the bill at once than to adopt a measure so atterly of tutle and impracticable. I understood him to avow, with a commendable frankness, that his object is to defeat the bill; but I think it would be more manly and more stateshmallike to defeat it by a direct and positive negation, rather than by a substitution which on its face amounts to nothing, and can come to nothing.

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manifice to defeat it by a direct and positive negation, rather than by a substitution which on its face amounts to nothing, and can come to nothing.

Without dwelling any further on the substitute which has been offered by the honorable and very worthy senator from Pennsylvania, I proceed to say that there are three different methods which can be adopted to provide for the construction of this work. The first is to make it exclusively a government work, to be executed by the enational executive, in conformity with the directions of Congress, and at the proper cost of the national treasury. It is believed that great advantages would attend this plan, provided the contract system be adopted, and the contractors be compensated in part out of the public domain. The contract system would, in my judgment, be indispensable to a proper economy. If it were executed after the fashion of the Cumberland road, I do not hesitate to say it would cost three or four times as much as it ought to cost. But by letting the road out in sections to the lowest bidders, I stypose the outlay could be brought within reasonable limits, and would not greatly exceed the cost of roads constructed by private enterprise and capital in various parts of the country. If, then, we were to add compensation in part from the public domain, in the usual manner, the requisitions on the treasury would be reduced so low that they could be promptly met without serious inconvenience to any branch of the public service. But this scheme is not promptly met without serious inconvenience to any branch of the public service. But this scheme is not now before us, and therefore I need not dwell on it further.

A second method would be to make the construction of the road exclusively a private undertaking, and to put the work into the hands of such citizens as may be disposed to furnish the requisite capital, and would except.

posed to furnish the requisite capital, and would execute the work on the most favorable terms for the public, the work on the most favorable terms for the public, leaving it to their own sagacity and sense of interest to fix its termini and general course, together with all the details of location, making them such compensation in land, or money, or both, as may be deemed adequate, just, and equitable. It is safe to say that whatever would be best for the stockholders in respect to the location and general course of the road would be quite likely, nay, morally certain, to accord with the public interests. The sagacity and shrewdness of private enterprise would be no unsafe arbiter of questions which it might be difficult to settle in the two houses of Congress.

The third method is the one which we have before us; it is the intermediate method, when governmental con-

it is the intermediate method, when governmental control and capital is combined to some extent with individual control and capital. The government is to fix the termini of the road, and its general course throughout, and the details of location and execution of the work are to be confided to such citizens as may be disposed to furnish the capital requisite for the consummation of this great enterprise. I need not, Mr. President, enter into a comparison of these three methods. The honorable committee have seen fit to adopt the last, and I can see no superior advantages in either of the two former to induce the to reject the latter. I therefore have made up my mind to support it.

without debate, or not act on it at all. We have so much bliberty of debate that we really have none at all as to most of the matters calling for the action of Congress. Hence, after many weary months in listening, with what patience we can muster, to never-ending disquisitions relating to anything else than ligitimate subjects of legislation, we find the moment at hand when the session must be closed. We then snatch up the appropriation bills and hurl them through the two houses, much as shot may be thrown out of a shovel. Nobody knows what they are, so or what they provide for, unless the thonorable members of the Committee on Finance of the Senate, and on Ways and Means of the House, be exceptions. What a rush do we witness of secretaries, clerks, and messengers, to and from the two houses, and to and from each and the Exceptive, all in hot haste, lest this or that appropriation should be lost by the advent of the inexorable hour.

Now, suppose all the surveys and explorations contemplated by the honorable senator from Peansylvania should be made, and all the different routes estimated, planned, and laid down on maps, (the world would bardly contain the books which would be written,) and the whole of this vast amount of information should be pitched into the two houses of Congress, what would become of it? What chance would there be that the subject would receive a dispassionate and a proper examination? Should we not have interminable debates, and

ject would receive a dispassionate and a proper examination? Should we not have interminable debates, and either no result or a very unfortunate one, rushed through on the very heel of the session? And, then, what heart burnings, what jealousies, what sectional dissensions should we not have? Would not the opponents of this policy, reinforced by those who are dissatisfied with this policy, reinforced by those who are dissatisfied with this policy, reinforced by those who are dissatisfied with this and the general course of the road shall or shall not be referred to the executive departments, depends, in my judgment, the question whether we shall or shall not on the only practicable scheme. With the President, there will be a proper sense of responsibility, high intelligence, and a just appreciation of the true interests of the country. I am satisfied there will be no want of either inclination, ability, or effort, on the part of the incoming Executive, to make a wise and safe disposition of this entire matter. It is possible that a reference to the President may cause a location contrary to my present impressions of expediency. I prefer the route by the South Pass, if practicable, because from thence we can branch to Oregon; whereas, if the southern route be taken that will be impossible. But I gm for a road any, how, whether North or South. Besides, I believe we shall have a railroad within twenty-five years, between the Mississippi and the Columbia or Puget's Sound. I believe it with almost as much confidence as I do in my personal identity; and I do not concur at all in the opinion expressed by my honorable friend from Pennsylvania [Mr. Cooper] the order of the south Pass. It believe it with almost as much confidence as I do in my personal identity; and I do not concur at all in the opinion expressed by my honorable friend from Pennsylvanian [Mr. Cooper] the other day, that the snows would render a railroad impracticable at the South Pass. It ject would receive a dispassionate and a proper examina-tion? Should we not have interminable debates, and personal identity; and I do not concur at all in the opin-ion expressed by my honorable friend from Pennsylva-nia [Mr. Coopen] the other day, that the snows would render a railroad impracticable at the South Pass. It such roads can be worked to advantage in New England, Canada, and even in Russia, in the winter season, I am quite sure there can be no barrier to their use at all times at the point mentioned, and even at a much higher latitude.

It is also insisted that it is improper to pass this bill for the reason that the surveys and explorations have not been had which have usually been deemed an im-portant, if not an indispensable, preliminary to legislative action on such a subject. If we were about to fix the teraction on such a subject. If we were about to fix the termini and general course of the road, this objection would have great weight; but when these points are to be referred to the Executive, and when the bill directs these very surveys and explorations to be made as a basis for his decision, it obviously has no force. I have already, in opposing the amendment of the honorable senator from Pennsylvania, [Mr. BRODHEAD.] stated fully my objections to surveys and estimates in detail of all the various routes, and of the modifications of each route with a view to comparison, and an accurate and precise calculation routes, and of the modifications of each route with a vice to comparison, and an accurate and precise calculation on their economy or cheapness. I say, if this is to be to the comparison of the chamber who will live to eee the day when the work is commenced. I maintain, however, that such follness and precision of maintain, however, that such follness and precision of maintain, however, that such follness and precision of survey and of estimates is wholly unnecessary. In such a vast undertaking, one or two millions the one way or the other is of no importance, and it would be folly in the extreme to waste ten millions in order to save one or two. With respect to the practicability of the work, much is already known. We need, for example, no survey to satisfy us that we can construct a road to the South Pass, and from themce to the eastern base of the Sierra Nevada. The ascent from the Missouri to the mass is so very gradual as not to be percentible to the

not of course say; but, in any event, it is highly probable that much would be gained to the country by the mineral developments which it would occasion wherever located. I say nothing of the addition which may possibly be made to the inexhaustible supplies of the precious metals which we aiready enjoy. I have, I confess, some serious misgivings in regard to this business of gold hunting. I fear it is an avocation not exactly calculated to induce those habits of steadiness, sobriety, economy, and self-denial, which are important to the well-being of society. What our people want its steady employment, and moderate gains. I indulge, however, no inconsiderable hopes that the experience of the world will be reversed in California, and that our citizens there will prove all that the friends of free institutions could desire.

I insist, Mr. President, in the next place, that this road will promote our internal trade and commerce. Much of the surplus products of the agriculture of the country will be turned over this road to California, and thus the eastern markets will be relieved, and agriculture every cessible to our people by a railressible to our people by a railre

will be turned over this road to California, and thus the eastern markets will be relieved, and agriculture everywhere benefited. If we could find on the shores of the Pacific a market for the products of even a few of the western States, it would be an immense benefit to all sections. The great difficulty with our agriculture is overproduction. Any considerable surplus of any crop will frequently cast down its aggregate value a hundred-fold more than the value of the surplus itself; hence by taking off from our easters markets some portion of the pressure from the West, by opening a vent in the direction of the Pacific, we shall confer an incalculable benefit on agriculture in every part of the Union. The good effect will be as sensibly felt in Virginia and North Carolina as in Illinois and Missouri. It is believed, also, that the manufacturers of the eastern and middle States will find a market for their fabries over this road. This will certainly be true of the lighter articles, as in trade and busi-

of time, (which is said to be money,) when this road shall be constructed and the transit from the Mississippi to the Pacific can be effected in a single week. It is not too much to say that the aggregate would amount annually to six per cent interest on the whole capital required to build the road. This measure, I again remark, will contribute power-

This measure, I again remark, will contribute hower-fully to the extension of our external trade and commerce, it is difficult to form now an adequate conception of the effect which a well-constructed, well-appointed, and well-managed railroad, connecting the waters of the Missussippi with those of the Pacific, would have on the business relations of the world. It would probably ere long result in a great commercial revolution, and make the United States the thoroughfare of Europe in going to and from China, and other oriental countries. Its tendinto subjection the wild Indian tribes roaming over the interior of this continent, who have been for years harassing the frontiers, particularly those of Texas, and doing infinite mischiet there and elsewhere. We shall also by such means find ourselves in a condition to fulfil our treaty obligations to Mexico in respect to these Indians, to which we have hitherto paid little attention. By the eleventh article of the treaty of Guadalupe Hidaigo we have bound ourselves in the most positive and peremptory manner to restrain forcibly the incursions of the savages from the United States into Mexico. I have before me that article, and it was my purpose to read it to the Senate, and comment on it, as I do not believe honorable senators are aware how stringent life terms are

ore me that article, and it was my purpose to read it to be Sensie, and comment on it, as I do not believe hon-orable sensitors are aware how stringent list terms are, and how high the obligations which we have assumed

incapable of self-government, and there is no latent quality about them that can ever make them respectable citizens. They have more Indian blood than Spanish, and are in some respects belew the Pueblo Indians, for they are not as bonest or industrious. In this remark I allude to the lower classes—there are some educated gentlemen with respectable families; about enough for magistrates and other official persons. There is not much increase in the population, owing to their gross deprayity. I doubt if there is a tribe of Indians on this continent who are more abandoned in their commerce between the sexes than the great majority of this people.*

their commerce between the sexes than the great majority of this people."

This is certainly a very dismal account of the state of things in New Mexico, but not more dismal than believe it to be truthful—a state of things which will continue to the end of time, unless we make the country accessible to our people by a mairoad. This would work a speedy and a highly salutary revolution. But so long as New Mexico remains in her present situation, we shall have a standing commentary on the folly of acquiring so remote a country, and of bringing under our jurisdiction a people so truly wretched.

But, Mr. President, I now come to a consideration which I deem of high importance, and which I would urge on the particular attention of the Senate. I maintain that the construction of this road is not only important, but indispensable to the defence of our Pacific possessions. It is, I believe, within the constitutional competency of Congress to carry a road through even a State for this purpose. When the case is as urgent as the present, we can vindicate the work precisely for the reasons which would justify the erection of a fortress to bar the entrance into the Bay of San Francisco. It is not only the most effectual, but the cheapest measure of defence which could be adopted. What is the condition of the Pacific coast now, and what will incontinue to be without a railroad? Defenceless, perfectly defenceless. And if a war were to break out with any leading European power, how long could we hold hose possessions? Honorable gentlemen seem to be disposed to awar. If you thus bring on a collision with Great Britain or France, what would become of San Francisco and the other towns situated on the bay of that name? What would be come of your mint and your navy-yard? Sir, that bay is left in such a situation that a maerable privater, with half a dozen guns, could enter it and hay the city of San Francisco under contribution; an inconsidents he with the contribution; an inconsident of the contribution of the care in the contribut

city of San Francisco under contribution; an inconsiderable force could ravish the whole coast of California

teer, with haif a dozen guns, could enter it and lay the city of San Francisco under contribution; an inconsiderable force could ravish the whole coast of California. I do not say they could conquer the State, but I do say they could do infinite mischief. I want, therefore, to hear no more of your Monroe doctrine until you have made some provision for the defence of the Pacific coast. I am for adjourning over the doctrine—Tehnantepec and all other topics of excitation—until this railroad can be constructed. The latter would seem to me an indispensable preliminary to the former. Place us in such a situation that we can in one month throw fifty thousand men on that coast, and you may explode your Monroe doctrine in face of all Europe, for aught Leare. We shall then be in a much better situation to defend than any enemy can be to assail. If we have underrated the assailing force, the telegraph will flash the intelligence to Washington, and in ten days we could not the error by reinforcement. Indeed, the existence of the road would obviate all danger of a k by any other than a naval force. What European power would think of sending an army to the Pacific, when they knew that we could meet them with a force of ten-fold power by the agency of the proposed railroad? To say that it is inexpedient or unconstitutional to provide for the emergencies of war by the means proposed is the same thing as to assert that the defence of the country is no part of the duty of this government. Congress a few sessions since directed a dock, basin and railway, to be constructed at the navy-yard in Cainfornia. So that it seems we have a right to get our ships on to railways. Why not our army?

But there are difficulties likely to result from a war with one of the leading powers of Europe, other than those already alluded to. If we suppose that we could defend the city of San Francisco, and protect our navy-yard and mint, it would undoubtedly be in the power of the public enemy to blockade the whole coast, and out off the transmission of inish the capital requisite for the consummation of this great enterprise. I seed not, Mr. President, enter in Case and From thence to the ascent from the design of the seed of the doubt and the last seed in the place of the consummation of this seed. It is about the last, and I can see no natural to support it.

But there are some objections which have been made then specified the seed to the place of the construction of the seed to the place of the construction of the seed to the

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the hour, in my judgment, for taking the initiative in respect to this great enterprise, and I ask it in the name of preparation for war which may come, for which we should be prepared. I ask it as a measure having an important bearing on credit and currency, and as indispensable to both in case of a war with a superior naval power; and I ask it that we may be well prepared on both coasis to repel aggression, and to assert the rights and maintain the honor and the dignity of the American people.

TO OUR SUPSCHIBERS The name of no person will be entered upon our bucks, or said

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power; and I ask it that we may be well prepared on both coasts to repel aggression, and to assert the rights and maintain the honor and the dignity of the American people.

But it must not be inferred from these remarks that I view war with approbation. I can hardly conceive of a war short of one strictly defensive, which I should look upon with complacency. I think men die fast enough anyhow. There is no necessity of calling into requisition gunpowder to hasten them into eternity. I am for peace, and for cultivating the arts of peace. I am for constructing this rainval in order that we may have peace, I verily believe that the consummation of the very peace. I verily believe that the consummation of the vast enterprise would do more to cause us to be respected, nay, to be feared by the nations of the earth, than the erection of twenty fortresses, or the construction of florty ships-of-the-line.

There is another consideration to which I would refer, and which, I doubt not, will be properly appreciated by the Senate. The construction of this road is notispensable to the consolidation of our Union, and to bind the two sides of the continent together by the strong ties of mutual dependence and reciprocal interests. Without the means of prompt and easy communication, it would be better not to have a country on the other side of the Rocky mountains. The existing state of things is afterly objectionable. I was in the first instance strongly apposed to the acquisition of California; but as the base admitted into the tanity circle, and now constitutes one of the brightest stars of our national galaxy, I am for holding on to her. There no idea that her people are or will be disloyal to our Union, but I wish to establish more infinate relations between her and that a railroad will do. When this is done, no centrifugal force can throw her out of her orbit, but she will shaintain her proper place in our system, and will revolve around the common centre to the end of all time. Besides, how is this general government to ex than I intended, but have abbreviated my remarks as much as possible. I have given a mere outline of ideas, some of which may not have occurred to honorable senators. I now leave the subject in the hands of the Senate. I hope we shall have a vote on it speedily. I hope the bill will pass the Senate, even if it does not pass the House. Should it fail to become a law at this seasion, I hope the subject will be resumed at the next, at the earliest practicable day. I have two years more, if my life is spured, to remain a member of this body, and if this measure is not now consummated, I will consecrate whatever energies I may have, and whatever ability I can command, to its prosecution at the next Congress. I have also to say to the honorable senator from Exas, [Mr. Rusk,] who has so intelligently, patriotically, and ably advocated this bill, that I will then stand by him and go with him, hand to hand and shoulder to shoulder, in efforts to carry through the Senate the proper legislation on this subject. I demand the construction of this railroad as a great American measure—as one which is called for by many weighty considerations—as necessary to enable this government to exercise its proper functions in time of peace, and indispensable to both sides of the continent in time of war, and as adapted in a high degree to promote the stability of our glorious Union and the prosperity of the pted in a high degree to promote the stab glorious Union and the prosperity of t